

New mobility concept tested at Whiteman

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo. — The third passenger aircraft in two weeks departed Jan. 13 with more than 400 Airmen traveling under a new mobility concept developed by U.S. Central Command Air Forces.

Airmen from several bases met here to catch contract airlift to an intermediate point where intratheater airlift would take them to various final locations, officials said.

"The idea of using continental U.S. bases as aggregation launch pads was both to avoid choke points at civilian airports and to better track deploying Airmen to improve intratheater

by Staff Sgt. Tia Schroeder

transportation," said Colonel **Chris Miller**, 509th Bomb Wing commander at Whiteman.

Capt. **Robert Austin**, 509th Logistics Readiness Squadron deployment readiness flight commander, and the Airmen began working in November on the details of getting the deploying Airmen here and then sending them on their way to forward locations.

They came by commercial airline, chartered bus and plane, and by personal vehicles. Most came in groups, but some came individually, Captain Austin said.

"Each group's itinerary had to be coordinated and timed so base support could be ready when they arrived," he said.

Many passengers arrived early, were bused to lodging on or off-base and then were allowed to relax until their departure time the following day.

"We were very pleasantly surprised to find that we were the first ones going through the process," said Chaplain (Capt.) **Matthew Franke** from F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo. The chap-

lain drove to Denver to take a flight to Kansas City, where he boarded a government bus to Whiteman. "Everything was going so smooth. We thought Whiteman had been doing this for years."

Everything went according to plan until an ice storm hit and caused airport officials to cancel a number of flights and delay others. With a freezing line holding 15 miles west of base, commercial aircraft were able to land and leave on time.

Overall, the coordination between the bases and Whiteman went well, Captain Austin said. "Everyone understood the importance of succeeding and pitched in, sometimes with long hours, to get folks out on time."

Captain Austin said success of the concept depended on many factors — ensuring Airmen left Whiteman on time, was one. Also, the process needed to save the Air Force money and reduce stress on Airmen and civilian hubs.

The flights left Whiteman on time, but it'll be months before the final results are known and analyzed.

1st Lt. Ed Gulick

509th Air Base Wing Public Affairs



Airmen load mobility bags onto a vehicle headed for a passenger aircraft at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo. More than 400 Airmen took part in the experimental mobility concept

set up by U.S. Central Command Air Force officials to establish a centralized point to provide better support for deploying Airmen.